6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

in the religious seclusion of the Kyungu. No Kyungu ever sat in public to judge his people until Mwakabanga, who reigned from 1894 to 1904. And if the nobles of Ngonde, who acted for the Kyungu in most mundane matters, only exercised judicial authority in matters immediately affecting his personal position, that was, I believe, because nothing more would have been tolerated by the chiefs. I cannot prove this point, for it only occurred to us after leaving Ngonde, but it seems probable that only under the presidency of the Kyungu himself could a central court have maintained itself; for the nobles of Ngonde were not of royal blood. Comparative evidence supports this hypothesis, and the ease with which the present Kyungu maintains his central appeal court to-day makes it still more probable.

6. *WARFARE. (MIDDLE PERIOD).*

(a) *CIVIL WAR.*

The endemic civil war of Ngonde appears rather to have resembled a series of rugby football matches without referees than the scientific mass-killing of modern Europe. "In the old days we used frequently to engage in little local fights. But always, when some occasion for war arose we used to send a message beforehand to tell the other side that we meant to fight them the next day at a certain time. And perhaps, if we had mentioned the morning, they would refuse and say they preferred the afternoon, and we would agree." (Was this always done?) "Yes, always; for if ever any group attacked suddenly and unexpectedly then everyone used to mock them for their cowardice and compare them with the Nguni——for it was by unexpected night attacks that the Nguni overcame us."

"And how did war start?" we asked. "Maybe a couple of boys would begin fighting, just with their fists, and as they fought another would come and join in to help his friend, then another on the other side, ——until at last yet another would join in with a spear and wound someone. Then the wounded man would be taken home bleeding, and the next day there would be war!" (And what was the point of fighting such a war?) "So that the others should be underneath and we on top. We used to fight from infancy onwards: we began as children by using mushrooms, then we took to reeds and finally, as we grew up, to sharpened stakes and spears." Such warfare seldom or never lasted for more than a single day. Cattle might be captured and houses burnt, but there was no acquisition of territory.

It was the territorial aim of the wars between the chiefs of Ngelenge and of Nguna which distinguished them from other civil wars; though

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even here it was rather position than area that was at stake: "We object to their proximity, let them move further off," said the chiefs of Ngelenge.

Civil wars varied in size and importance from little local fights between neighbouring villages, fiefs or chiefdoms to more extensive fights between groups or even whole houses of chiefs. And in every case the political organization took on, for the time, a military character. Great-commoners led their villagers to war, chiefs their great-commoners; the senior of a group of brother chiefs summoned his juniors to help him, while a great chief summoned all the local chiefs of his house. But only the Kyungu himself could summon the territorial nobles.

Now leadership in war is a factor of political authority; the great chiefs, nobles, chiefs and great-commoners derived part of their status from their military functions. But, on the other hand, it is equally true to say that it was the other factors of their status which enabled them to exercise this military authority.

In every war, for instance, there were religious elements. Chiefs had war medicines and prayed to their ancestors for success; while the loyalty of the great-commoners and people to their chief had both a spiritual and an economic importance. Sometimes, in peace, the leading commoners would dream of war and, if they dreamt of running away, then their chief would hastily kill meat for them. Such dreams were witchcraft and, unless promptly dealt with by a feast, were held to be a certain harbinger of future defeat.

"In civil warfare the Kyungu never took any part at all, he remained impartial at Mbande. His sons fought one another by themselves." (But what of the war, between Ngelenge and Ngana, did he not help his own sons in any way?) "No, he did not. For both 'the cousins' and 'the sons' alike were his children, he was the father of all."

(b) *TRIBAL WAR.*

The procedure of tribal warfare and that of the occasional punitive expeditions against the Kyungu's subordinates was the same. Messages were sent by the mulabata to all chiefs and nobles of the plain to come to Mbande. There the more important of them entered the Kyungu's house and were given their orders by him personally: "And then, when the Kyungu had told them whom to go and fight, he would finish up by saying 'That is all then, go away now and call down blessings on your arms.' So they would leave his house and gather all together, chiefs and their men, and pray."

The premier noble of Ngonde would begin, reciting all the names of the sacred graves of the Kyungu and asking each one to bless them in their fight. Then after him each great chief in turn would pray in like

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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643 separate inheritance sometimes went through the ritual because he might later be required as a chief, and the son of a conquered chief who had retained limited authority over a small area might be permitted to 'come out' with his senior brothers also. The common pattern, then, was for two sons to 'come out' as principals, but for a variety of reasons one or more 'younger brothers' might join them.

In Ngonde, as opposed to BuNyakyusa, several brothers normally went through the ritual as principals and the reason given us was that power should be distributed. They would say, we were told, 'If we bring out only two they will be boastful and ill-use their people, let them be many therefore, then, if a man has a quarrel with his chief, he can flee to another. . . .' In BuNyakyusa [622] any tendency to tyranny in a chief was effectively curbed by his village headmen; but it is possible that headmen never had as much power in Ngonde as they did in BuNyakyusa.

An analysis of the genealogies of Nyakyusa chiefs shows that very often one half-brother lost power to the other, but occasionally several brothers (e.g. seven sons of Mwaipopo 26) got independent chiefdoms, and a junior brother (e.g. Mwakyusa 38) ● [669] might attract a larger following of men than his seniors. Mwakyusa led his men from the hills to the more fertile plain and drove out the Kyungu of Ngonde from the lake-shore north of the Songwe river.

The 'coming out' was traditionally the occasion when authority was handed over by the elder generation to the younger. The old [761] chief retired and he was *expected to die shortly*. In Nyakyusa theory he died because his men no longer loved him: 'A chief did not [808] live long after the "coming out" of his sons; he died because there was war and people would complain: "He is too old, when we fight we are beaten, he had better die, perhaps the heir will help us." He died of the "breath of men".' But, as will be shown, his headmen had the duty of smothering a chief who seemed likely to die, and they were much more ready to do this after the 'coming out' of his sons than before. It was right that the sons should come out before their father's death, but not right that the period of coregency should be extended, for the division of authority between old and young was uneasy. When the old chief did die his [793] headmen became the priests (*abapaga*) responsible for the sacri- [622] fices in his grove, and the young men were solely responsible for the defence of the country and the administration of justice.